



Joseph Nayquonabe Sr.

September 4, 1944 - May 21, 2025

Waabishkibines, Joseph Nayquonabe Sr., age 80, of Onamia, MN passed away on May 21, 2025. A visitation will be held at 7 PM on Saturday, May 24, 2025, at the Miskwaanakwadookwe Community Center on the Mille Lacs Reservation. A Funeral Ceremony will begin at 10 AM on Sunday, May 25, 2025, at the Miskwaanakwadookwe Community Center on the Mille Lacs Reservation with Ombishkebines officiating. Interment will be in the Little Flower Cemetery.

Joseph Leonard Nayquonabe, Waabishkibines, passed away peacefully, leaving behind a legacy of love, service, and storytelling that touched countless lives. A devoted father, husband, veteran, and community leader, Joe was a man who embodied strength, compassion, and unwavering dedication to his family and community.

Joe was the beloved husband of Rita Nayquonabe, with whom he shared a deep love story that began at Onamia Hospital where they worked together. As a father, he was extraordinary—having the rare gift of being exactly what each of his children needed in any moment. He was immensely proud of Peter, Jessi, Joseph Jr., Nolan, Johanna, and Stanley, rushing home from work each day to spend time with them golfing, watching movies, or simply being present. He was also a proud grandfather and great grandfather, known simply as Papa by all of his grandchildren.

A proud graduate of St. Cloud State University, Joe instilled the value of education in his children by bringing them to campus and showing them the possibilities that learning could provide. He served his country with honor in Vietnam, where he demonstrated true heroism by saving a fellow soldier under fire, taking bullets to his back in the process—though he rarely spoke of his heroic acts, such was his humble nature.

Joe became a legendary resource in the Indian community, particularly for those seeking sobriety, traditional teachings, and language. He was dedicated to the ceremonial drums and enjoyed his travels to the drum communities all over Anishinaabe country.

Joe was a man of no pretense who was respected for his authenticity and sought out for his wisdom. He respected history, was grounded in the present, and remained optimistic about the future. His legacy lives on through his children, who each carry forward different aspects of his remarkable character: his strength, his gentleness, his humor, his storytelling gifts, and his unwavering love for family.

Waabishkibines was, in every sense, a giant among men—not just in stature, but in heart, character, and the profound impact he had on everyone fortunate enough to know him. He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

He is survived by his children, Peter (Shannon) Nayquonabe and their family, Kayla Avery, Jayden, Jordan, Mackenzie, Alexander, Ayla (great granddaughter); Jessi Nayquonabe and her family, Madison (Stephen) Conway, Carter, Kennedy, McKinley, Jeremy, Greyson (great grandson); Joe (Chris) Nayquonabe and their family, Bella, Phoenix, Bear; Nolan (Crystal) Nayquonabe and their family, William, Devin, Jasmine, Jalissa; Johanna Nayquonabe and her family, Brooklynn, Asher, Jackson (great grandson);

Stanley (Jamie) Nayquonabe and their family, Aiva, Mark, Emery, Stanley Jr., and Isaiah; and many loving relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Rita; parents, Joe and Harriet; sons, Marcus and Nolan; daughter, Tammy; brothers, Elmer, Victor, AJ, Russell; sisters, Bonita, Loretta, and Delilah.

Cemetery Details

St. Therese Little Flower Cemetery

43600 Highway 169
Onamia, MN

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY **24**. 8:00 PM (CT)

Miskwaanakwadookwe Community Center
18458 Minobimaadizi Loop
Onamia, MN 56359

Ceremony

MAY **25**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Miskwaanakwadookwe Community Center
18458 Minobimaadizi Loop
Onamia, MN 56359

Tribute Wall

AA

“ Joe was my hero.....perfect example of someone I'd aspire to resemble. From military service to the sweat lodge, he was more than helpful and he was all he could be to all who knew him!
Giigawaabamin

Aanakwad - May 24, 2025 at 08:15 PM

TB

“ Joe was a mentor and I considered family. He was an amazing father and a wealth of knowledge.

I miss seeing Joe and his boys at the Golf course over the last number years.

I like so many will miss Joe and my life is better for knowing Joseph. I wish him a good journey and I know I will see Joe again someday.

God Bless.

Thomas Burr and Family. 🌹❤️👍

Thomas Burr - May 23, 2025 at 11:09 PM